

T H E  
L O U N G E R.

[N<sup>o</sup> XCVIII.]

Saturday, Dec. 16. 1786.

*Nec domos potentum  
Noffemus, nec imagines superbas.* MART.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

S I R,

**I**T is a long time since my last correspondence with you; and, indeed, I did not know that your Paper continued to come out, till lately that I saw it at a certain great house where I was on a visit. Of that visit, Mr Lounger, if you will give me leave, I will tell you some particulars. Since I find that some of the great folks take in your paper, it may do them no harm to be told a little of how things are about them; or if, as I am apt to believe, they are not easily to be mended, it will at least give us little folks some satisfaction to get out our thoughts of them.

Your predecessor, the Author of the *Mirror*, who was kind enough to take some interest in my family, was well acquainted with its connection with Lady —, the great Lady who first set my wife and daughters heads agog about fashion and finery. In my last to you, I informed you of our having luckily lost her acquaintance, though I had got into another hobble by our intimacy with my rich neighbour young *Mushroom*. I am ashamed to tell you, Sir, how things have come about; but, as I told Mr Mirror, I was always rather too easy in my way: I have been myself on a visit at the house of the great Lady! (I beg her Lord's pardon, but that's the way of speaking in our neighbourhood). But this comes through Mr Mushroom too. You must know, that since he came home, by presents of shawls and muslins to my Lady, and, as some folks say, by lending some of his spare rupees to my Lord, he is become a great favourite at — Lodge. And so my Lord and Lady and he have laid their heads together, that Mr Mushroom shall be member for our county the next vacancy; and they have been driving and riding about among us, and giving feasts and dances at — Lodge and Mushroom Hall. I fought a little shy, as the saying is; but Mrs and Miss Mushroom so tickled the ears of my wife and daughters, and my Lady talked so much of the happiness she had formerly enjoyed at my house, and of her regret for having lost the honour of my daughter Mrs —'s acquaintance, that they were silly enough to forgive all her former neglect of them; and then they so be-laboured me with the great things that might be expected from my Lord's patronage, and Mr Mushroom's attachment to my family, (and they had some shawls and muslins too), that I at last agreed to give my vote as they wished. Oh! then

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there was so much fuss and kindness, and such invitations to go to — Lodge, and so many honours and pleasures—that, in short, Mr Lounger, having got in my corn and fold my cattle, I was prevailed on to lay out a little of the money in a new suit, to get a new saddle and bridle for my mare to trim my brown colt for a portmanteau-horse, and mounting John upon him, whom I could but spare at this season too, I accompanied one of my brother-freeholders, a plain man like myself, who takes a little of his wife's advice, to — Lodge.

As I knew something of the hours there, I took care that we should not reach the house till within a few minutes of four, tho' my neighbour was in a sort of flutter the last three miles, for fear of being too late. But when we got off our horses, and walked into the lobby, we found we were much too early for the house. We had stalked about for some minutes, without knowing where we should go, when, who should I see come in but my old acquaintance Mr *Papillot*, though it seems he had forgotten me; for when I ask'd him if my Lord or his Lady were within, he gave me a broad stare, and said that some of the servants would inform us. None of the servants, however, chose to be so kind; for though one or two peep'd out of this and that door, they took no sort of concern in us, till at last a big surly-looking fellow appeared, pulling down the ruffles of his shirt, and bade us follow him into the saloon. Here we found an open window, and a half-kindled fire, and were left to cool our heels for above an hour, before any living creature appeared. At last, a civil enough sort of gentleman, whose name I never heard, for the family called him nothing but Captain, came in, and after talking a little to us about the weather, the roads, and the crop, (though he seemed to have but a bad notion of farming), left the room again, telling us that my Lord and Lady would soon be down; but that dinner was somewhat later that day than usual, as they and their company had been at a bear-baiting, my Lord's bear having been backed against his neighbour Sir Harry Driver's dogs. This accident kept us from our dinner till six o'clock, by which time my neighbour and I, who had breakfasted betimes, were almost famished. Meanwhile we were left to entertain ourselves with the pictures, not to mention my Lady's French lap-dog, which a servant brought in (I suppose by the time he had been dressed for dinner) and laid on a cushion at the fire-side. I found indeed one of the late numbers of the *Lounger*, which I began to read; but my neighbour *Broadcast* yawned so on the first page, that I laid it by out of complaisance to him. Soon after the lap-dog, some of her Ladyship's company came in one after another, and did us the honour of staring at us, and speaking to the lap-dog. The dinner-bell was rung before my Lady appeared, who, to do her justice, behaved politely enough, and began to ask half a dozen questions about our wives and children, to which she did not wait for an answer; but to say truth, she had her hands full of the bear-baiting company, who, when they were all assembled, made a very numerous party. My Lord entered a few minutes after her: he did not give himself much trouble about any of us, till  
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on the Captain's whispering something in his ear, he came up to where my neighbour and I stood, and said he was very happy to have the honour of seeing us at — Lodge.

When we went to dinner, we contrived to place ourselves on each side of our good friend the Captain, and things went on pretty well. I knew that at such a table the victuals were not always what they seemed; and therefore I was cautious of asking for any of your figured dishes. At last, however, I got helped to a mutton-chop, as I would have called it; but the Captain told me it was a ragout. When I tasted it, it was so Frenchified, and smelt so of garlic, which I happen to have an aversion to, that I was glad to get rid of it as soon (and that was not very soon) as I could prevail on a servant to take away my plate. The Captain, who guessed my taste I suppose, very kindly informed me, there was roast-beef on the side-board, and sent a request to a fine gentleman out of livery, who had the carving of it, for a slice to me. But whether he thought I looked like a cannibal, or that the dish, being little in request, was neglected in the roasting, he sent me a monstrous thick cut, so red and raw, that I could not touch a morsel of it; so I was obliged to confine my dinner to the leg and wing of a partridge, which the second course afforded me. I did not observe how my friend Broadcast fared at dinner; but I saw he caught a Tartar at the desert; for, happening to take a mouthful of a peach, as he thought it, what should it be but a lump of ice, that stung his hollow tooth to the quick, and brought the tears over his cheeks. The wine after dinner might have consoled us for all these little misfortunes, if we had had time to partake of it; but there the French mode came across us again, and we had drank but a few glasses, and had not got half through the history of the bear-baiting, when coffee was brought.

When we went into the drawing-room, we found the card-tables set, and my Lady engaged with a party at Whist. She recommended some of us to the care of a friend of hers, a Lady somewhat advanced in life, though she was still a maiden one, for they called her *Miss Lurcher*, who made up a table at Farthing-Loo. As this was a game I was used to play at home, and the stake was so very trifling, I consented to make one. My neighbour Broadcast refused, and sat down at the other end of the room, to hear one of the young Ladies play on the Harpsichord, where he affronted himself by falling asleep. It had been as well for some other people that they had been asleep too. This game, though it began with farthings, soon mounted up to a very considerable sum, and I had once lost to the amount of Twenty Pounds. A lucky reverse of fortune brought me a little up again, and I went to supper only 5000 farthings, that is five guineas, out of pocket. It would not become me to suspect any foul play at — Lodge; but I could not help observing, that *Miss Lurcher* held *Pam* plausibly often. I have been told since, that she has little other fortune than what she makes by her good luck at cards; and yet she was as finely dressed as my Lady, and had as fine a plume of feathers on her hat: I shall never look on that hat again without thinking that I see *Pam* in the front of it.

When we were shewn to our rooms, I looked for the attendance of  
John,



John, to whom I had given strict charge to be watchful in that matter; but he was not to be found, and, I was told, had never appeared at the Lodge after he went with his horses to the inn. Before going to bed, I stole into the chamber where my friend Broadcast lay, and agreed with him, who seemed as willing to be gone as myself, that we should cut short our visit, and (since French was the word) take a French leave early next morning. We were both up by day-light, and groped our way down stairs to get our hats and whips, that we might make our escape to where John and the horses were lodged. But we could not find our road to the lobby by which we had entered. There did not seem to be a creature stirring in the house; and, after wandering through several empty halls, in one of which we found a Backgammon-table open, with a decanter not quite empty, on which was a Claret label, we went down a few steps to another passage, where we imagined we heard some body stirring. But we had not gone many steps when the rattle of a chain made us take to our heels; and it was well we did; for we were within half a yard of being saluted by my Lord's bear, whose quarter it seems we had strayed into. The noise of our flight, and his pursuit, brought a chambermaid, who happened to be up, to our assistance, and by her means we had the good fortune to get safely through the lobby into the lawn, from whence we had only a mile or two's walk to the inn where John was put up.

For the want of John's attendance, I had comforted myself with the reflection, that if he had not been employed in taking care of me, the horses would fare the better for't. But when we reached the house, we found that John had been employed in nothing but taking care of himself. The servants of my Lord's other guests, who were there, kept a very good house, as the landlord called it; and John had been a good deal jollier at dinner the day before than his master. It was with some difficulty we got him on his legs, and brought him along with us. It was a long time before my portmanteau could be found; and my new bridle, with a plaited bit, had been exchanged by some clearer-headed fellow, for an old snaffle not worth a groat.

Such, Sir, is the history of my first visit, and I hope my last, to — Lodge. But as I have found the experience even of one visit a little expensive, I think it is doing a kindness to people in my situation, to let them know what they have to expect there. When my Lord asks a vote again, let it be conditioned on the part of the freeholder, that he shan't be obliged to study the pictures of his saloon above half an hour, that he shall have something to eat and something to drink at dinner, and be insured from falling into the paws of the bear, or the hands of Miss Lurcher.

I am, &c.

JOHN HOMESPUN.

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